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RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
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INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 8053
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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - QUAKE RELIEF IN CHINA
AND CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

¶1. LEAD STORIES: All Thursday morning papers gave top coverage to a GOJ decision to use SDF aircraft in response to a Chinese request that Japan send relief goods for victims hit by the recent massive earthquake in central China.

¶2. "SDF Should Join Relief Efforts" On a Chinese request for Japan to use SDF planes to airlift earthquake relief supplies, the business-oriented Nikkei editorialized (5/29): "It would be the first time ever if SDF planes fly into China. Given a prevalent sentiment among Chinese people that their country was victimized by aggression of the Imperial Japanese Army during WWII, the Chinese request is quite unusual and epoch-making for bilateral relations.... On top of the dispatch of ASDF aircraft, Japan should study sending additional deployment of medics to China."

¶3. "Japan as Neighbor Should Provide Utmost Assistance" The liberal Mainichi argued in an editorial (5/29): "Any state is nervous about a foreign military's entry into its territory. No country is more allergic to foreign armed forces than China. The fact that the Chinese government has requested a deployment of SDF planes illustrates that the damage caused by the quake is more extensive than imagined. Japan must respond to the Chinese request positively.... There is the possibility that an SDF aircraft dispatch would go beyond ceremonial military exchange, resulting in a big push toward substantive confidence-building."

¶4. "Economic Exchange Given Priority to Build Stable

Relations" On Wednesday's meeting in Beijing between Chinese President Hu and Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party Chairman Wu, the top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri wrote (5/29): "By agreeing on the resumption of bilateral dialogue through economic exchange while setting aside contentious political issues, the Beijing meeting set the basic tone for establishing stable cross-strait relations under the China-friendly Taiwanese President... Faced with such daunting challenges as the unrest in Tibet and the massive earthquake in central China, the Hu administration needs to ensure regional stability, including relations with Taiwan."

15. "Great Opportunity for China to Enhance Hu's Political Standing" A Beijing correspondent for the liberal Tokyo Shimbun noted (5/29): "An agreement between the Chinese Communist Party and Taiwan's Nationalist Party to resume talks for the first time in nine years offers the Chinese an 'historic opportunity' to end bilateral hostility. At the same time, it has become a moment where the Hu administration, by playing up the 'unity of the Chinese people,' is able to restore its confidence and its solidarity with its people, which have been damaged in the course of the unrest in Tibet and the fatal quake in central China."

SCHIEFFER